



From the editor

WILLIAM PERKINS

How we govern ourselves

By the time this issue of *The Baptist Record* arrives in mailboxes across Mississippi and the world, the 2012 annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in New Orleans will have convened and then adjourned. In between, messengers from thousands of churches that comprise the convention came together to praise and worship God and His Only Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, as well as to prayerfully address the business of the convention.

We will hear and read a lot about what happened at the annual meeting. This would therefore be a good time to review our polity (system of governance) and how we go about conducting ourselves in the world in which we live and minister.

For the loyal readers who have studied and already know all this information, congratulations. If you haven't read up on how Southern Baptists go about our business (even though you are one), read on.

First of all, Southern Baptists are not a Church, with a capital "C." This is probably the most misunderstood part of our polity, especially among non-Southern Baptists.

We do not have an ecclesiastical hierarchy that hands down rules and assignments, like Catholics, Presbyterians, and others. An individual Southern Baptist church decides its own budget, staff, and missions commitments, and also chooses on their own to voluntarily affiliate with Mississippi Baptists, Southern Baptists, and any other group they believe will further the cause of the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20). Individual churches also have the right to remove themselves from any organization to which they belong, such as the Southern Baptist Convention and Mississippi Baptist Convention.

Southern Baptist churches own, acquire, and dispose of their property as they choose, and purchase religious literature and programs that conform to their needs and not to some ecclesiastical hierarchy's dictates. They can even decide to band together and form associations for local missions, if they are led by the Lord to so do.

That's why we are a Convention, and not a Church. That's why messengers from the churches that make up the Mississippi Baptist Convention and the Southern Baptist Convention meet once a year to give direction to the work of those organizations. The churches tell the conventions what to do, not the other way around.

Another poorly-understood facet of Southern Baptist and Mississippi Baptist life is the Cooperative Program, an amazingly simple financial concept that allows for the funding of everything from light bulbs at the local church to the largest Protestant seminary in the world (Southwestern Seminary in Ft. Worth, Texas). Here's how it works.

Church members give their tithes and offerings each Sunday. The church then meets to decide on their budget, retaining a portion of the tithes and offerings for local ministries and sending the remainder to the state Baptist convention (in our case, the Mississippi Baptist convention).

The messengers from local Baptist churches in the state then meet once a year to decide on the state convention's budget, retaining a portion of the gifts accumulated from the local churches for state ministries and sending the remainder to the Southern Baptist Convention.

Messengers from those local churches then meet once a year to decide on the budget for the ministries of the Southern Baptist Convention, based on the gifts sent by local churches through the state conventions.

That's how Southern Baptists fund themselves. Since its inception in the 1920s, the Cooperative Program has grown to be recognized as the largest and most effective way yet conceived to fund the manifold ministries of Southern Baptists.

That's a largely simplified explanation of a massive and complicated system of ministries and ministry funding. There are of course many intricacies that are not covered here. Suffice to say, however, it works well and has withstood the test of time as well as all the challenges the devil has thrown our way.

To God be the glory for all He has accomplished through His faithful servants, Mississippi Baptists and Southern Baptists. The future awaits.

Is decline in our SBC future?

For five years in a row, Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) membership has declined. Total membership has decreased two percent since 2007 including a near one percent drop this year — an acceleration of decline.

The more disconcerting trend is the percent change from year to year. That trend is going exactly where we expected it — and not where we want it to be. This trend points to a future of more and faster decline, and it is a 60-year trend.

This year, we declined at about the same rate the United Methodist Church has over the last few years. Based on the trend of annual percent change in SBC total membership, we are catching up with the Methodists, and will match their decline rate consistently by 2018.

Membership in the SBC is now on a multi-year decline. Our "growth" trend is now negative and our membership is decreasing. As researchers, we "bring forward" membership numbers for non-reporting churches in order to maintain consistent estimates of the size of the churches and the convention.

Therefore, the argument that some churches are not reporting their membership numbers won't work. In fact, it may be delaying the indication that further decline has already occurred.

There are other denominations and movements that are currently merely managing their decline. However, I for one would like for our leaders, pastors, and members to stare reality in the face and fight for our future.

Facts are our friends, even if these facts are not so friendly. We can join God on his mission and do it in unity, so what do we do in the face of these facts?

First, we must rally around the reason we cooperate in the first place, namely the mission of God and partnership through our theological consensus. We have every advantage of the modernized world to be a multi-dimensional family of churches. Yet we often find ourselves at odds with one another over issues that fall within our denominational confessional consensus. Another battle means more casualties and departures.



Guest opinion
with Ed Stetzer

Secondly, we must engage new leaders. Every week, you and I meet new leaders from differing generations and differing ethnicities. It is our privilege to encourage them and learn from them. There is no need for the pendulum to simply reside on one side of the spectrum or the other.

We do not need to simply be paternal to those who are new to leadership in our ranks, nor do we need to completely abandon all of our places of leadership just for the sake of "new blood" and "new voices." Rather, we have the privilege to partner with new leaders, young leaders, ethnic leaders, and leaders who've been around a while who want to partner with us through the Cooperative Program and according to the Baptist Faith and Message.

Thirdly, we need to reach more people and plant more churches. Southern Baptists love evangelism as long as someone else is doing it, but "someone else" is not doing it either. Every year, it takes more Southern Baptists to reach one lost person, as the member to baptism ratio shows.

We also need more churches. The numeric change in churches from 2010 to 2011 was only 37 — not even a full percentage point. We need to fill the growing void created when churches close yet the U.S. population continues to expand. Church planters are a gift to the convention, and we need to prepare, partner, and commission them at every turn.

Considering planters as competitors in our communities was never wise.

see STETZER on p. 4

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BIG FIND — Jim Parker (left) and Dan Warner (center) of New Orleans Seminary discuss the features of a newly-discovered cavern in the Tel Gezer ancient water system with Tsvika Tsuk (right), chief archaeologist at the Israel Nature and Parks Authority, shortly after its discovery June 12. (BP photo courtesy of NOBTS)

Uncovering buried context

New Orleans Seminary team makes huge discovery during Israel dig

KARMEYOSEF, Israel (BP) — An archaeological discovery by a New Orleans Seminary (NOBTS) team on June 12 will never be on display in a museum, but it is as significant as many from the Holy Land.

The team, under the direction of the Center for Archaeological Research at New Orleans Seminary, located a large open section in a cave at the eastern end of the ancient water system at Tel Gezer in Israel.

The discovery marks a major milestone in the seminary's three-year exploration at Gezer and sets the stage for future research. The breakthrough is valuable in understanding the cultural context in which the Bible was written.

The team still plans to locate the water source for the system and explore the entire cave, seeking a possible rear exit and pottery evidence to help date its construction in future digs.

The dig leaders believe the rock-hewn water tunnel was cut by the Canaanite occupants of Gezer between 2000-1800 B.C., around the time of Abraham. Other scholars date the system to the time of the Divided Kingdom after Solomon.

The site is mentioned numerous times in the Bible including in 1 Kings 9 when the city was given to Solomon by the Egyptian pharaoh. Solomon rebuilt and fortified the city with a massive wall and unique gate system.

The latest discovery could help archaeologists date the Tel Gezer water system and understand how it works, which would offer valuable information to students of the Bible.

"Opening the cave is something we have been working toward for three summers, wondering if it even existed," said Dan Warner, associate professor of archaeology and Old Testament at NOBTS and director of the Gezer Water System Expedition.

"It gave me a rush. Once inside it gave us a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction, but we are not done by a long shot," Warner said.

A small dig team broke into the cavern at about 8 a.m. on June 12. What they found was a large, wedge shaped open area of the cave measuring 26 feet wide by 30 feet long and reaching a height of nearly seven feet at its highest point down to only a few inches at its lowest.

The surface inside is covered with a thin layer of cracked mud similar to what one would find in a dry pond or lake bed. The chamber also contains large boulders of chalk that have broken free from the

cave roof. The roof, which slopes up at a 45-degree angle, seems relatively sound.

Though the cave was briefly opened by Irish archaeologist R.A.S. Macalister

in 1908, he was unable to take a photograph due to condensation on his camera lens and poor lighting. The NOBTS team also encountered condensation on the camera lens at first, but after ventilating the area with a large fan the team was able to obtain the first photographs and videos of the cave's interior.

Macalister and French archaeologist Peré Vincent both looked at the cave and believed it was natural. The cave was only open a short time during the Macalister excavation before a torrential rain caused a retaining wall to collapse, sending all of Macalister's excavated dirt back down into the water system, where it blocked the cave.

The NOBTS team was the first to see the cavern in more than 100 years. Only

a few people have ever seen the cavern in the past 3,800 years.

"This find verifies Macalister," Warner said. "Macalister was right. There is a cavern at the end of the water system."

Once inside, Warner and the other team leaders — Jim Parker from NOBTS and Tsvika Tsuk, chief archaeologist for the Israel Nature and Parks Authority — were able to confirm that the cave is indeed natural.

"It's a cave, not a carved space. It's a natural cave," said Parker, associate professor of biblical interpretation at NOBTS and the dig engineer.

Parker said the space is larger than Macalister described. Some of the differences in the dimensions may be attributed to the various roof collapses since Macalister explored the cave. The roof collapses have also opened more of the cave.

"We're able to see a part of the cave that Macalister never saw," Parker said. "This leaves the possibility that there is another entrance [to the cave] from another location off the tel." A tel is an archeological mound where past civilizations have built and abandoned structures.

The discovery came just two days after visits by several high-ranking Israeli authorities. Reuven Pinsky, head of the Heritage Division in the office of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and Shuka Dorfman, director-general of the Israeli Antiquities Authority (IAA), each toured the water system on June 10.

To view a video of the dig, visit <http://sbcchristianpress.org/BPnews>.



BREAKTHROUGH — Jim Parker (left) and Dan Warner of New Orleans Seminary examine the chalk walls of the natural cavern at the end of the Gezer Water System in Israel. The seminary archaeology team broke into a large open chamber two days before the end of the 2012 dig season. (BP photo courtesy of NOBTS)

It had been a dreary, rainy day when during the afternoon I saw a young man pull off to the side of the road and in a rather hurried fashion he jumped out of his car. I wondered if something had happened, and so I watched to see what his next action would be. Then in kind of a run/jog he headed back up the road as cars were going by in both directions. Finally he ran over to the middle of the road, and I saw what had captured his attention. There in the middle of the road was a great big turtle. It was larger than a softball but smaller than a basketball. As he leaned over and picked the big turtle up from behind, it appeared to me that this young man knew what he was doing when it came to turtle handling.

All of the cars had slowed down around him as he took the turtle and began to walk back across the road from the direction that apparently the turtle had come. Almost instantly a verse of Scripture from Galatians 6:1 came to my mind that seemed to have application for the moment. "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." I thought about how many times that many of us have been right there where the turtle was and even with people passing by us on all sides and maybe even running over us we did not realize that we were going the wrong way, in a lot of danger, and no one bothered to slow down enough to care.

As I watched the fellow pick-up the turtle and take it back to its more natural habitat, I thought, well I could have done



Help the Turtle

that but I didn't do it. I thought how many of those folks whizzing by going in both directions maybe slowed down enough not to hit the turtle but did nothing. Therein is the dilemma that grips us so many times. I am not sure how much brain power that a turtle has but I wonder if he had any sense of danger. I have seen many a good man, woman, or young person who was on the edge of a catastrophe, even destruction, and did not realize that they were in trouble. As with that poor turtle, you can go chasing after things across the roads of life and get yourself out there in the middle. It does not matter what direction you go you can be in a heap of trouble. If someone of the family of God, if someone like you and me does not care enough to slow down to stop, and to divert other traffic they will not make it.

Now here is the fascinating thing about turtles and some of us of other species. I don't believe that this turtle was on the endangered species list. I am sure that there are some kinds of turtles, maybe the large sea turtles or some in some particular ecosystems around the world that are endangered. But I don't believe this type of turtle in Mississippi is endangered except when they get out there in places that they really should not be. Then there lives are endangered and at least for that one he could soon be on the endangered species list.

How many people living around us, some with whom we have even become accustomed to their warped, worrisome lifestyles just continue on oblivious to the tragedy that could be near them. One of the interesting things that the young man did was that he stopped, helped the turtle, and brought him back into an environ-

ment in which he could live safely. There are thousands of people who have gotten away from the Lord, away from the church, and if we would continue to reach out to them and love them they could be reclaimed and restored for Kingdom work. They can live again in an environment that is safe and protected by the very hand of God. You can show somebody the way and you can make a difference in their life.

As I watched all of this taking place, I was reminded how many times Jesus stopped traffic and turned to help someone. In so doing He saved a life and salvaged a precious soul. A woman with an issue of blood, a man dying on a cross, a Jewish scholar who came under the cover of darkness, a disciple who had denied and failed, and the stories move one to another to another until one day the need arrives at my heart and yours. Gloriously He comes to care about us and to restore our relationship. As the event finished with the turtle carried back to his habitat, I was pointedly reminded that the Lord wants me to stop, care, and restore some turtles that cross my path. Sometimes they may be moving slow, sometimes awkward, and sometimes going in the wrong direction. The Lord wants me to be the one on the scene to stop, step out there, and with a helping hand turn things around. That is the grace of God extended through your fingertips and mine. So keep your eyes open and watch this week to see if God might give you one or a number of opportunities to help the turtle.

The author can be contacted at jfutral@mbcb.org.

STETZER

cont. from p. 2

It is time for us to move on from such attitudes and partner with them for Kingdom impact in our cities.

We stand at a key moment and my sermon-in-a-sentence is this:

A denomination perpetually at war with itself cannot survive, but a denomination focused on engaging new leaders, reaching out to other ethnicities, and reaching others through evangelism and church planting will thrive.

In the face of these statistics, I am still encouraged. I hear more and more people talking about

mission, having the important conversations to get us focused there, and a desire to be a convention of churches God has called us to be.

We can pull together, join God on mission, and be the conven-

tion God has called us to be.

Stetzer is president of *LifeWay Research*, a division of *LifeWay Christian Resources* in Nashville. His commentary appears courtesy of Baptist Press.

BIBLIOPHER

NGPOP PWYSE OHSC EYU, SECUWP,

QGVWOPG SECO EWPS PGGH UG, SECO

EWPS QGRYGJGA QRGPPGA WDG SEGT

SEWS EWJG HCS PGGH, WHA TGS

EWJG QGRYGJGA.

NCEH SLGHST: SLGHST-HYHG

Clue: N = J

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Proverbs Twenty-Seven: One

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THE BaptistRecord

What I tell you in the darkness, speak in the light; and what you hear whispered in your ear, proclaim upon the

HOUSE TOPS.

Matthew 10:27 NAS

June 21, 2012

HouseTops is a Baptist Record supplement produced by the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board's Communication Services.



Malachi accused God's people of leading lives that were "out of sync" with the Lord. This new Four-Sunday emphasis asks believers to return to the Lord (3:7), remember His commandments, and respond in generosity (3:10-11). When we do, God will multiply our witness among our neighbors, and bless our land (3:12).



Contact Lisa Leavelle at 601.292.3347 or lleavelle@mbcb.org for more information on this new resource.

Traktion

LIVING IN SYNC WITH GOD

School PrayerWalk & Teacher Appreciation

Sunday, July 29, 2012

Visit

www.mbc.org

> Events

> Woman's

Missionary

Union

for more details

Music Mississippi

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Look for more specific details concerning Music Mississippi
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Dates for Rallies:

NORTHERN RALLY:

Tuesday, August 28

Neshoba Association Family Center

Choir: The Singing Saints, FBC, Newton

Preacher: Sonny Atkins, Mendenhall

Conferences:

- Fun Time Sharing the Good News
Humor and magic with Tony Martin/MBCB

- Discipleship: Life in the Spirit as a Senior
Tom Crocker, LifeWay Representative

- Leadership: "Seeing Something New"
Glenn Shows, MBCB

SOUTHERN RALLY:

Thursday, August 30

Pearl River Association

(McNeil, Close to Picayune)

Choir: First Baptist Church, McComb

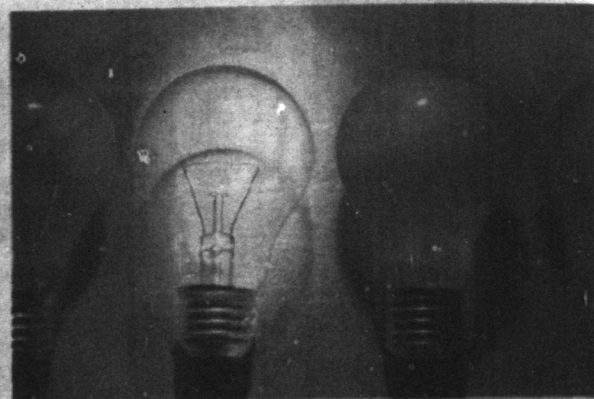
Preacher: Jerry Mixon, MBCB Director of Stewardship

Conferences:

- Fun Time Sharing the Good News
Clayton Jordan, Dothan, Ala.
Musician/Ventriloquist

- Discipleship: Life in the Spirit as a Senior
Marcus Peagler, MBCB

- Leadership: "Seeing Something New"
James Haynes, FBC, Biloxi
Counselor/Senior Minister



2012 Pastors Workshop

— Creating a Culture of Evangelism —

First Baptist Church
Natchez
Monday, August 6, 2012

Lee Conference Center
McNeill
Monday, August 20, 2012

9:00 a.m. — noon

- Registration is due by July 30, 2012, so that materials can be prepared.

- For more information, or to register, call 601.968.3800, ext. 305, or 800.748.1651, ext. 305.

Sponsored by the Pastors/Leadership Development Department,
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

MISSISSIPPI WMU

LEADERSHIP TRAINING 2012

August 9 — Church Missions Leadership Training
FBC, Starkville, Golden Triangle Association

August 17-18 — Annual Missions Celebration, featuring
• WMU Annual Meeting
• Associational Missions Leadership Training
• Church Missions Leadership Training
at Garaywa Camp & Conference Center in Clinton

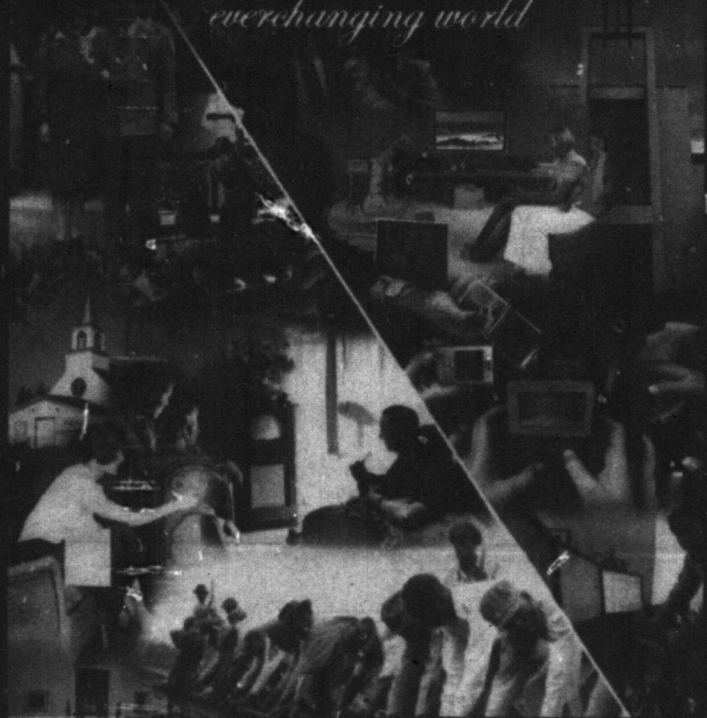
August 23 — Church Missions Leadership Training
Clarksdale Baptist Church

August 30 — Church Missions Leadership Training
FBC, Gulfport
Gulf Coast Association

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Hernando, Miss.

Registration: 8:30-9:00 a.m.
Conference: 9 a.m.-12:15 p.m.
No preregistration required
Cost: \$7 per person

For more information, call the
Church Music Department
1-800-748-1651 or 601-292-3272

Pray this day for...

June 22 – July 5, 2012

"... neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

— Romans 8:39

Pray for: **John* and Amy Purl**, IMB missionaries ministering to European Peoples in Bulgaria through volunteer coordination, and community and home evangelism.

Pray for: **Tracy and Eugenia* Putnam**, IMB missionaries ministering to European Peoples in Russia through theological education, church and home outreach, and evangelism.

Pray for: **Michael* and Annette* Racey**, IMB missionaries ministering to American Peoples in the United States through church and home outreach, and evangelism.

Pray for: **Mike and Linda* Ray**, IMB missionaries ministering to European Peoples in Ukraine through strategy coordination, church and home outreach, and evangelism.

Pray for: **Steven* and Nickolee* Roberts**, IMB missionaries ministering to Sub-Saharan African Peoples in the United States through church planting, church and home outreach, and evangelism.

Pray for: **John and Sarah* Perkins**, IMB missionaries ministering to European Peoples in France through church and home outreach, evangelism and providing mission support.

Pray for: **Michael and Sarah* Prewitt**, IMB missionaries ministering to European Peoples in Portugal through church planting, church and home outreach, and evangelism.

Pray for: **Marty* and Mary* Roberts**, IMB missionaries ministering to European Peoples in the United States through strategy coordination, church and home outreach, and evangelism.

Pray for: **Steven* and Ruth* Robertson**, IMB missionaries ministering to Sub-Saharan African Peoples in the United States through church and home outreach, evangelism, and administrative support.

Pray for: **Burton* and Margaret Schmitz**, IMB missionaries ministering to Sub-Saharan African Peoples in Senegal through church and home outreach and evangelism.

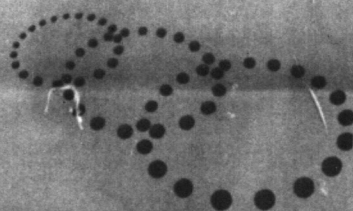
Pray for: **George and Geraldine* Smith**, IMB missionaries ministering to Sub-Saharan African Peoples in Uganda through church planting, church and home outreach, and evangelism.

Pray for: **Janna Smith***, IMB missionary ministering to American Peoples in Mexico through church planting.

Pray for: **Thomas Smith***, IMB missionary ministering to American Peoples in Peru by providing regional office support.

Pray for: **Lane Vance***, IMB missionary ministering to European Peoples in France through evangelism.

*These International Mission Board missionaries claim Mississippi as their home state. The IMB missionaries listed in the HouseTops prayer calendar are currently active in 2-4 year terms or in career service.



**Transformational
Sunday School**

Transformational Sunday School Training

July 14, 21, 28; August 11, 18, 25; September 8, 15, 22

Make your plans now to attend Sunday School training designed with the needs of your church in mind. Planning teams work with local church and association leaders in each region of the state to prayerfully determine the needs of your church. Each conference is customized with those needs in mind. Specific conferences will be announced as needs are discovered.

AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION AND AGRICULTURAL FELLOWSHIP

The Agricultural Foundation and Agricultural Fellowship Meeting will be held on August 18, 2012, at First Baptist Church, Clinton, Fellowship Hall, beginning at 9 a.m.

Francis Horton, BGR Director, Central and South Asia will speak on clean water needs around the world and how support can be provided for clean water projects.

For more information contact Men's Ministry at cwright@mbcb.org or 601.292.3334.

State Literacy Missions Retreat

August 2 - August 4, 2012
1:00 p.m. Thursday - 1:00 p.m. Friday
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"We've a Story to Tell"

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1 John 1:5



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Registration form will be posted the first of May at
mbcb.org/mission_strategy/wmu/literacy

HOUSE TOPS

College News



Brett Golson, senior pastor at First Church of Louisville, will join the **WILLIAM CAREY UNIVERSITY** faculty and staff as coordinator of bi-vocational programs and assistant professor of religion.

Other College News:

► **Mississippi College and Hinds Community College** have developed a new agreement to create a "seamless transfer process" between Hinds, Mississippi's largest two-year college with 13,000 students and MC.

FREEDOM

cont. from p. 1

contraception but they would be religious people. So that's one thing in motion, a kind of marginalization of a certain set of viewpoints ..."

■ "[A] body of people with certain moral views about controversial issues like abortion, same-sex marriage, and contraception are being told by outsiders, 'That's your religion, whether you know it or not or whether you like to admit it or not, and your religion, your doctrine, the tenets of your religion, they're not reasonable. Now you hold them and in some limited, strange sense they might be true, but they're beyond rational defense. ... So religion and doc-

trine thereof is being squished into this space reserved for the beyond the rational."

The contraceptive/abortion mandate "shows either a hostility to religious freedom or a complete ignorance of the First Amendment," Land said.

"When the federal government asserts the right to universally mandate actions, trample religious convictions and then grant exemptions to those it so chooses, the government is behaving perilously like a secular theocracy granting ecclesiastical indulgences to a chosen few."

Baptist theologian Timothy George, dean of Beeson Divinity School at Samford University, expressed concern that even Baptists, who have been known as champions of religious liberty, have experienced "a kind of amnesia about these roots of reli-

gious freedom." He pointed to two developments in the last 100 years that he believes have resulted in this becoming an issue:

■ "The reduction of Baptist identity to rugged individualism and the restriction of religious freedom to simply what's good rather than the communitarian emphasis that was there certainly in the 17th Century when Baptists emphasized covenants, catechisms, and confessions."

■ "The issue of church-state separation 'has become the subject of a great deal, I think, of mis- construal as to what it originally meant and what it might mean today. It has become, in fact, for many Baptists and others the severance of religion from public life, and now we are caught again in this misunderstanding of the most basic rudiments of our religious faith."

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Need a light?

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life." (John 8:12)

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)
If you make a decision for Christ today, contact a local Southern Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

The EPPC's American Religious Freedom Program plans to start caucuses for legislators in all 50 states to help protect religious freedom, said Brian Walsh, the program's executive director.

"We're willing to do whatever it takes, make sacrifices, in order to make sure that we continue to make religious freedom something that we can pass on to future generations," Walsh told Baptist Press. "We've been given it; we can't squander it."

STUDENT MINISTER

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The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

News submitted for publication in The Baptist Record must be either (a) typewritten, (b) neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper, or (c) neatly printed on standardized forms provided by the newspaper. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone.

News may be submitted electronically to the address below, and must be contained in the mes-

sage segment of an e-mail form. Due to increasing virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs may be color or black and white. Instant photos and digital printouts are not reproducible. Digital photos may be used if submitted as a JPEG file via either e-mail, CD or DVD. Photos must be clear, sharp, and well-lighted. Cell phone photographs and other low resolution items are generally not publishable. Photographs can not be returned. Please do not attach photos with tape or staples.

All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. Photographs must depict people. No landscape, building, or object-only photographs will be printed. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. News items and/or photographs depicting benefits and activities for secular or outside organizations will not be published. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date.

Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis.

Submit news and photographs to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org.

THE VILLAGE VIEW



Dr. Rory Lee, Executive Director

P.O. Box 27

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GIFTS OF HONOR AND MEMORY

A portion of The Village View is allocated each month to a list of Gifts of Honor and Memory. Many groups and individuals elect to pay tribute to others through this sensitive, meaningful, and helpful medium. This feature is hopefully designed to further honor, with taste and respect, those who are and have been special to our special friends.

APRIL 2012

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Houseparent responsibilities are varied and somewhat dependent upon which campus and to which cottage the couple is assigned. However, all Houseparents need to be in good physical, mental and emotional health. They must be cooperative and comfortable working in a team environment.

To apply for the current Houseparent openings, please contact Celeste Cade at ccade@baptistchildrensvillage.com or 601-922-2242.

A complete job description and application may be downloaded at www.baptistchildrensvillage.com.

The Loyalty Dare • Joshua 14:6-15; 15:14-17

This week we continue our study of significant dares adults can take to draw closer to God and be effective witnesses for the Lord. The study theme for these lessons is Character at the Crossroads.

Disloyalty. Every day we are bombarded with examples of people being disloyal in some way. One spouse is disloyal to another by having an extra-marital affair. An employee is disloyal to the company by sharing confidential information with the competition. White collar financiers are disloyal to their clients by lining their pockets while investors absorb huge losses. At work, one employee is disloyal by undermining the credibility of another employee with malicious gossip.

In a day when disloyalty seems to be the character trait du jour, adults are challenged to take the Loyalty Dare. The purpose of the Loyalty Dare is to lead adults to respond courageously to life's challenges by daring to cultivate lifelong loyalty to the Lord.

1. Testimony of Loyalty (Josh. 14:6-12) Even during the time of the Exodus and Conquest (ca. 1446-1406 B.C.), God's people showed disloyalty to Him on numerous occasions. One notable occasion relevant to our lesson was the episode of Moses sending out 12 spies to reconnoiter the Promised Land (Numb. 13:1-14:25). Of the 10 spies, only Joshua and

Caleb trusted God to give the land to His people (Numb. 14:6). Caleb was singled out for exceptional loyalty to the Lord (Numb. 13:30; 14:24).

Caleb was 40 years old when Moses sent him to spy out the land. Coupled with the wilderness wanderings and the time for the conquest of Canaan by the Israelites, some 45 years passed before Caleb stood before Joshua again (Josh. 14:6-12). He requested the hill country for Judah.

His loyalty to God was recorded in various ways. He encouraged taking the land because the LORD would give it to them, a report according to his "convictions" (Josh. 14:7). He "followed the LORD" his God "wholeheartedly" (14:8-9). He trusted the LORD's promise and credited Him with keeping him alive the intervening 45 years (14:10). He also reaffirmed his desire to conquer the hill country, basing his confidence on the LORD's promise and help (14:12). A close examination of

these verses (14:6-12) and related passages reveals a reciprocating relationship wherein the LORD was loyal to the man who stayed loyal to Him. So it is today, God stands ready to prove Himself faithful to all people who live faithfully for Him.

2. Reward for Loyalty (Josh. 14:13-15)

Joshua rewarded Caleb's loyalty by blessing him and granting his request. He gave Caleb the city of Hebron and its environs

Explore the Bible

with W. Wayne VanHorn



(14:13). Caleb's inheritance was tied inextricably to the fact "he followed the LORD, the God of Israel, wholeheartedly" (14:14). The concept of following wholeheartedly renders the literal Hebrew for being "fully after the LORD." All of his adult life, Caleb fully followed the Lord's leadership in his life, trusting God to give him strength to face life's challenges. He was confident his God was bigger than any obstacle he faced.

What about us? Do we firmly believe we will receive both short-term and long-term rewards for remaining loyal to the

Lord? On one occasion I was about to take a flight in the midst of a bad storm. I could sense my wife was a bit apprehensive. I told her if anything happened to me, God already had given me more than I could ever earn if I lived to be 100. He blessed me with a godly wife, three children, and a roof over our heads, food, clothes, employment, and purpose. Our extended family comprised of brothers and sisters in Christ from all walks of life have been an unending source of friendship, encouragement, and support. God definitely has been loyal to me and my family.

3. Challenge to Loyalty (Josh. 15:14-17) Joshua granted Caleb's request for the hill country; Caleb did not have the luxury of laying down his sword and resting on his laurels. The loyalty and confidence he expressed in God's promise and presence had to be demonstrated by clearing the enemy from the territory. At age 85 he strapped on his armor and pursued God's promise. He also challenged others to demonstrate loyalty by promising his daughter to the man who captured the city of Debir. Caleb became the perfect example for us as we seek to achieve our lesson's life goal of cultivating lifelong loyalty to the Lord.

VanHorn is dean of Christian Studies at Mississippi College, Clinton.

What is Your Decision? • Malachi 3:13-4:6

"I don't know why I even go to church! I never get ONE thing out of it." Really?! Do we think God is not listening when we speak? He knows our thoughts. When we enter the sanctuary on the Lord's Day with all the wrong motives for all the wrong reasons, how can we expect to leave changed? God is to be the subject, the object, the point and the focus of our worship. Anything less is self-worship. God is to be first in everything: our hearts, our lives, our work, our ministry, our homes, our families. Anything less than first place is out of place. Through this study, I have been convicted about my own apathy. Father, please forgive me. Does my coldhearted apathy hurt You more than my lossiness?

This study of the book of Malachi concludes our unit theme: Apathy-Who Cares? Our lesson titles have mirrored the writing style of Malachi, presenting questions that demand answers: Are You Just Going Through the Motions? Do You Honor Your Commitments? How Do You Treat God? Today's title asks, "What is Your Decision?"

After exposing the gaping holes in their holiness and completing their checkbook checkups, the Lord presents His final accusation. Their wicked words had wounded the God of the Word. "Worship is a

waste of time! Useless! What good did it do? We tried so hard to LOOK spiritual and God didn't even notice! The godless folks around us are prospering and getting away with everything." Such was the response of the first group. Thank goodness for that other group.

I love those "ands" and "buts" and "thens" and "therefores" in scripture. Then...those who feared the Lord and esteemed His name spoke. They spoke to one another. They were united in genuine, heartfelt worship. The Lord heard and treasured what they were saying, with full intention of reward. He made note of them in a book of remembrance. God named them "My Own Possession." He declared that they will be spared as one spares his own son who serves him. These folks are family.

God knows those who are truly His and is equally aware of those who are truly not. He doesn't guess about them. He doesn't

wonder about them. He doesn't wander away from His plan for them. After a four hundred year intermission, His Son will speak and positively identify the two groups as wheat or tares and sheep or goats. The ones who were willing to be last will find themselves standing first in His estimation.

There are plain promises for those who follow and for those who refuse to. God makes the game rules for "Fruit or Consequences." God knows how and when the book ends. He wrote it.

In Malachi four, God repeats a message heralded by every one of His Old Testament prophets. The day is coming for the evildoer. His fire will fall. Ash piles will rise. For those who fear the Lord, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings. Every time I read that phrase in scripture, I want to put it to music. The music does not end here with these final words of the Old Testament. There will be an extended interlude in the symphony

until the crescendo of Bethlehem. Rest assured, the music will continue until that great and terrible day of the Lord. It's on His calendar already.

In the final verses of this book, God leaves three all-encompassing thoughts. First, He commands them to remember (keep, guard, do) the law of Moses, the man of God. Next, He promises the coming of Elijah the prophet of God. Jesus will identify him to be John the Baptizer in Matthew 11. Trusting that the "great and terrible day of the Lord" is yet to come, I believe that we can expect still another appearance of Elijah. Finally, God promises restoration of the family.

First words and last words are noteworthy. The last word in the book of Genesis is "Egypt," land of bondage. The last word in the book of Ruth is "David," King of Israel, tribe of Judah, ancestor of Christ. The last word in the book of Psalms is "Lord" the Composer. The last word of the Old Testament is "curse." Hallelujah, the first word of the first sermon of Jesus was "Repent." The first word of His second message was "Blessed." Abolish Apathy. Cursed? Repent. Blessed! Rinse. Repeat.

Brown is the staff evangelist at First Church, Richland.

Bible Studies for Life

with Becky Brown



In Malachi four, God repeats a message heralded by every one of His Old Testament prophets. The day is coming for the evildoer. His fire will fall. Ash piles will rise. For those who fear the Lord, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings. Every time I read that phrase in scripture, I want to put it to music. The music does not end here with these final words of the Old Testament. There will be an extended interlude in the symphony

Revivals & Homecomings

► **Calvary Church, Greenwood:** Homecoming, June 24; Sunday School, 9:45 a.m.; worship, 11 a.m., followed by covered dish lunch; Glen Davis, speaker.

► **Franklin Church, Flora:** Homecoming, June 24; Sunday School, 9:45 a.m.; worship, 11 a.m., followed by potluck lunch; James Buie, speaker; Nathan Weathersby, music.

► **Unity Church, Moselle:** Homecoming, June 24; Sunday School, 9:30 a.m.; worship, 10:30 a.m., followed by dinner on the grounds and gospel sing.

► **Pilgrim's Rest Church, Ethel:** Homecoming and revival, June 24 - 27; Sun., Sunday School, 10 a.m.; services, 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon. - Wed., 7 p.m.; Larry Odom, speaker; Mary Jordan, music.

► **Coldwater Church, Philadelphia:** Revival, June 24 - 27; Sun., 11 a.m. and 6:45 p.m.; Mon. - Wed., 7 p.m.; Curt Pace, speaker; Tim Moore, music.

► **Rock Bluff Church, Daniel:** Revival, June 24 - 27; Sun., 11 a.m., followed by dinner on the grounds; Mon. - Wed., 7 p.m. with ice cream fellowship nightly; Sticky Dalrymple, speaker; Ray Gates, music.

Vacation Bible School



On the first day of VBS at **FIRST CHURCH, CLEVELAND**, a church member brought his airplane, parking it on the front lawn of the church, so the children could see it when they arrived.

Upcoming Vacation Bible Schools:

- **Longview Church, Starkville:** June 24 - 28, 6 - 8:30 p.m., for ages 4 - 6th grade; for further information, call (662) 769-4774.
- **Sandy Hook Church, Sandy Hook:** June 23 - 27, 6 - 8:30 p.m.
- **Sand Hill Church, West:** June 24 - 28, 6 - 8:30 p.m.; nursery - adult.
- **Liberty Church, Carrollton:** June 23, 9 a.m. - 4 p.m., with lunch and snacks provided.



FIRST CHURCH, HICKORY FLAT: June 4 - 8, with three professions of faith. Shown are participants and leaders. Gary Linville, pastor; Jason Fly, children's minister.



For **GRACE CHURCH, VICKSBURG'S**, VBS, this sea plane was built by Randall Martar and decorated by Sandy Adcock, left, and Beth Griffith, right. The plane was named W. Trim in memory of Wayne Trim, who served as a VBS helper each year.



HOPEWELL CHURCH, WATER VALLEY: June 4 - 7; enrollment, 41; average attendance, 35.

AT RIGHT: **COLDWATER CHURCH, PHILADELPHIA:** May 5, with 17 children participating. Shown are some of the participants.



Just for the Record



The WMU of **SILVER CREEK CHURCH, PIKE COUNTY**, sponsored an Easter party at Dickerson place March 31.

The RAs of **FREENY CHURCH, CARTHAGE**, participated in the car races at RA Day 2012 at Central Hills Baptist Retreat.

